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## Arms Control Issue Rates More Campaign Attention

ARMS CONTROL is a central issue of national strategy today. It might have a larger part in the election campaign if the candidates' talk could compete with the vigor of President Johnson's recent actions, like the negotiation of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty and the reopening of bilateral discussions with the Soviet Union.

Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy has at least helped to kindle some thoughtful debate. He aims at a comprehensive program of arms control and rational disarmament based on a series of international agreements.

The existing strategic balance should first be frozen, to save the world from the blood-draining costs and frightful instabilities of another round of the arms spiral. Chemical and biological warfare should be kept from further development. Nuclear test bans should be broadened to the technical limits of potential surveillance. Eventually, we should be able to agree on reduction of arms to levels that can be patrolled with relatively nonintrusive methods of inspection.

More needs to be said about the tactics of achieving these aims, but who could quarrel with their substance? Nevertheless, most of the candidates have been unable or unwilling to detail their idealistic goals for a peaceful world.

McCARTHY'S tactical proposals have to be read in the light of the sillier and more specious arguments that were forwarded for the funding of the Sentinel antiballistic missile (ABM) project. We were asked to spend \$8 billion, to start with, as a bargaining point with the Soviets, to hurry them into the ABM moratorium. (Sentinel is the project that was originally supposed to protect us from an undeterrable attack by the Chinese while their strategic nuclear offensive capacity was still limited. It is hard to see how this could have ever been of any use, except to protect the U.S. from Chinese retaliation in response to a preemptive blow. The allure of such an ultimate answer to China's growing nuclear power, or rather the world's belief that we might entertain such a hypothesis, remains one of the most dangerous booby traps of the project.)

McCarthy suggests that we announce a holdback, "pending speedy agreement with the U.S.S.R.," on the ABM and also on more advanced models of our deterrent strike force. Poseidon and Minuteman III.

These restraints deserve thoughtful consideration, but not coupled with the negotiations. If we can safely defer spending on ABM and possibly on other strategic systems, now is certainly the time for a stretchout. Reasonable expectations of detente and negotiated arms plateaus must not be ignored in our planning; we must also calculate how quickly we can restore our momentum if exigencies demand it.

THE SNARE WE must

avoid is the subjugation of our basic policies to mere bargaining gambits. Then we let the Soviets trap us in our own games: for example, to make us spill out \$8 billion in earnest money, resources so painfully extracted from urgent domestic programs and from positive support of world development.

A more subtle problem is that unilateral gestures are not always a friendly accommodation. On the contrary, they veil a threat of renewed intransigence if the other side fails to respond according to our own time scale.

In past years, we have indeed passed over many opportunities for peace-speeding unilateral actions. Direct communication with the Soviets over arms control having finally been established, it is a poor time to concoct unnegotiated *faits accomplis*. However well intentioned, they stand a grave risk of being perceived differently in Moscow, or in Seattle, than to Washington.

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